

VZCZCXRO6847  
PP RUEHPA  
DE RUEHUJA #2340/01 3630646  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 290646Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7858  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 2572  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002340

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA;

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/24/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: PROMINENT KATSINA POLITICIAN DISCUSSES PROSPECTS  
FOR A PLANNED OPPOSITION "MEGA-PARTY"

REF: A. ABUJA 2332

[1](#)B. ABUJA 2260

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission James P. McNulty  
for reasons in sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

[1](#)1. (C) Prominent Katsina resident, former Governor, and ex-founding member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) Alhaji Lawal Kaita recently expressed confidence to Political Officer regarding prospects for formation of an opposition "mega-party" before the next national elections. He described former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and Head of State General Muhammadu Buhari as willing to put forth whatever candidate would enhance the opposition's chances. Kaita described the recent arrest of former Sokoto Governor Attahiru Dalhatu Bafarawa as an attempt by the Nigerian Government (GON) to embarrass the opposition. END SUMMARY.

-----  
"MEGA PARTY" PROSPECTS  
-----

[1](#)2. (C) Ex-founding member of the ruling PDP and former Governor of the old Kaduna State Kaita expressed confidence to PolOff during a mid-December visit to his residence in Katsina regarding the opposition's ability to challenge the PDP in the next national elections. Kaita, who later helped form the opposition Action Congress, claimed that former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and former Head of State General Buhari had become willing to put forth whatever candidate could best defeat the PDP in the 2011 national elections. He said that, since the first time Atiku Abubakar and Buhari met to discuss collaborating on this initiative, neither had said that serving as the party's presidential candidate represented a "do or die" issue.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Kaita, the two political leaders even wondered why many doubted that they could work together. He claimed that Buhari "commands more love than anyone else in the North," while Atiku Abubakar "has tremendous admiration." Furthermore, he claimed that former Sokoto Governor Bafarawa's recent arrest (Ref B) would strengthen the opposition movement's support, especially given that, according to Kaita, the arrest involved an obvious and deliberate attempt by the government to embarrass the opposition.

[1](#)4. (C) Kaita claimed the opposition would prefer to run

against President Yar'Adua in the 2011 national election, because he would be "easier to beat" than other possible candidates, including Vice President Goodluck Jonathan. He said he was sure that, if the Vice President assumed the Presidency, he would run for an additional term as President in 2011, as "no one would be able to prevent the incumbent President from running." Regardless of the PDP presidential candidate, however, Kaita expressed optimism that the opposition would win the 2011 elections "at all levels of government" from the Presidency to the National Assembly.

15. (C) Kaita said that the opposition had formed several committees to gather support throughout Nigeria and that the next "mega-party" meeting would likely occur at the end of December, at which time they would decide whether to form a new party, merge into an existing parties, or remain individual parties that would work together in a coalition, depending upon which structure would give them the best advantage to challenge the PDP.

16. (C) Earlier, former Sokoto Governor Bafarawa told Political Counselor and Political Specialist October 27 that QPolitical Counselor and Political Specialist October 27 that he and other members of a national democratic initiative had planned to establish a National Democratic Movement (NDM) that would explore ways to promote unity among opposition parties before the 2011 national elections. He expressed hope that such a political initiative or movement could eventually form a so-called "mega party" around which he, Atiku Abubakar, Buhari, and other political opposition leaders could coalesce. He said he wanted the "mega party" to enjoy popular support throughout Nigeria rather be

ABUJA 00002340 002 OF 002

perceived as a party based in one region or around any existing party. At the time, he had also detailed alleged harassment by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), including retention of his passport, which he had successfully fought through the courts.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

17. (C) While opposition party leaders have discussed the idea of establishing a "mega party" for some time, such efforts remain at a formative and apparently critical stage. Uniting behind an individual presidential candidate, rather than forming a loose coalition, would obviously enhance prospects for a "mega party" in the next national elections. We will continue to monitor developments, including the December 9 arrest and detention of Bafarawa in a prison in Sokoto for alleged misappropriation of public funds and money laundering from his 1999 to 2007 tenure as governor.  
SANDERS